

**MINUTES  
CITY OF ST. CHARLES, IL  
SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP  
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2019 5:45 P.M.**

**Members Present:** Stellato, Silkaitis, Payleitner, Lemke (5:47pm), Turner, Rogina, Gaugel, Vitek (6:00pm), Bessner, Lewis

**Members Absent:** Bancroft

**Others Present:** Mark Koenen, City Administrator; Rita Tungare, Director of Community & Economic Development; Russell Colby, Community Development Division Manager; Fire Chief Schelstreet; Chris Minick, Director of Finance; Bob Vann, Building & Code Enforcement Division Manager; Pete Suhr, Public Works Director

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was convened by Mayor Rogina at 5:45 P.M.

**2. ROLL CALLED**

Roll was called:

Present: Stellato, Silkaitis, Payleitner, Turner, Rogina, Bancroft, Gaugel, Bessner, Lewis

Absent: Bancroft

\*Lemke not present for roll call, arrived at 5:47pm.

\*Vitek not present for roll call, arrived at 6:00pm.

Ms. Tungare said HVS was engaged as a consultant last fall to conduct an economic impact analysis for the Fox River Corridor Master Plan, with the focus on the improvements in the area north of Main St. and South of the railroad bridge. The purpose of the workshop tonight is to provide the Council and members of the public with a progress report of the elements of the study, which have been completed thus far, what coming ahead, and to gather some input and direction from Council on the forthcoming financial projections.

Tom Hazinski-HVS- said they're at midpoint in the schedule and they feel they are at the point where they understand the level of demand that this development would attract, which is the very first step in doing an impact analysis; everything else flows from that estimate of what kind of utilization the post development would get. He said there's not a lot of similar type of developments, and the ones we've found that are, are different in many respects from what we've planned here. This took a lot more creativity and looking for data sources to find back-up and a rationale for understanding what the demand is. He then shared a presentation to give the Council and audience members an overview of the report and to present the preliminary findings:

**Market Assessment:**

- Drive time population and income
- Age and education
- Tapestry segments-characterizes people by their lifestyles.
- Recreation spending and participation
- Lodging supply

### **Participation Trends:**

- Land Based & Water Sports
- NW Illinois Trail system
  - Fox River Trail & Illinois Prairie Path usage data

### **Stakeholder Interviews:**

- Steering Committee Kickoff Meeting
- Fox River Corridor Foundation
- St. Charles Public Works and WBK Engineering
- St. Charles Park District
- St. Charles CVB
- Downtown St. Charles Partnership
- Mayor Rogina
- Chicago Whitewater Association
- St. Charles Canoe Club
- St. Charles Rowing Club

### Key Themes:

- Connectivity
  - Potawatomie Park and river activities closer to downtown
  - Paths under Main St.
- Maintain river level north of railroad trestle
- Increase utility of river south of railroad trestle
- Recreation opportunities
- Potential to increase interest in and visitation to the river
- Improve development opportunities in adjacent parcels
- Operation and maintenance responsibilities to be determined
- Overall positive but some wariness from downtown property owners

### **Comparable Destinations – 8 identified**

- Bicentennial Riverfront Park-Yorkville, IL
- Chattahoochee River Walk-Columbus, GA
- Confluence Park-Denver, CO
- Falls Park on the Reedy-Greenville, SC
- Boise Greenbelt-Boise, ID
- Wausau River District-Wausau, WI
- Charles City Riverfront Park-Charles City, IA

- East Bank Trail-South Bend, IN

Destination Analysis:

Weighted score of 0.483 for St. Charles, #3 of 9 destinations, based on:

- Hotel and Lodging Businesses
- Food Service & Drinking Businesses
- Arts, Entertainment & Recreation Businesses
- Storefront Businesses
- 2018 Total Population
- 2018 Median Household Income
- Participation in Mountain Biking, Road Biking, Freshwater Fishing, Hiking, Walking for Exercise, Canoeing/ Kayaking
- Cost Index

**Building Program**

Three alternatives for River Park- reference to WBK exhibits.

Building Program-Whitewater Channel:

- Two-channel design would be more expensive but would attract more users, especially from outside the immediate market area.
- Uses will include advanced freestyle and traditional whitewater kayaking and canoeing
- Quality of the whitewater channel design is crucial to its success
  - The whitewater community is insular and uses word-of-mouth recommendations to evaluate a whitewater park.
  - Users will travel long distances to use a high-quality park, and will ignore a nearby low-quality park for a distant preferred alternative
- Support Spaces for Whitewater
  - Users will need shelters to protect from adverse weather, changing areas, and restrooms nearby
  - On the riverbank clear entry and exit points are necessary that are connected by a path
  - Important to users and influences their assessment of a site

Building Program-Recreational Channel:

- The recreational channel will feature three small whitewater elements on the drop structures, but will mostly be smooth and flat.
- Designed to attract users from local area who are interested in using the river recreationally and will likely use other elements of the park as well
- Uses will include beginning kayaking and canoeing, stand-up paddle boarding, and other boating.
  - Will require facility to rent equipment to beginning users including helmets, life vests, kayaks, paddles, and paddleboards.

Building Program- Land-based Elements:

- Zip Line

- Improved Trail Connectivity
- Children's Nature Play Area
- Support Spaces

### **Demand Analysis**

- Baseline Demand: Festivals/Events, Active weeks for recreational activity
- Preliminary Visitation Estimate (Whitewater): 21,767 annual visits
- Demand Projections (overall): 222,960 opening year (2024), 261,880 stabilized (2027)

### **Downtown Parcels**

- Riverfront Parcel Border- Parcels influenced by improvements: 150
- 54 identified for development that would increase utility/taxable value
- 9 with development constraints, 45 potentially for development

#### Next Steps- Downtown Parcels:

1. Continue business owner interviews
2. Project potential development and property tax rates in the downtown area
3. Project change in property values in the downtown area due to development
4. Analyze fiscal impact of riverfront development

### **Study Next Steps:**

1. Continue comp research and interviews
2. Update Demand model – events, visitation, room nights
3. Analyze financial operations
4. Downtown parcel/impact analysis
5. Visitation impacts
6. Qualitative impacts
7. Cost benefit analysis
8. Draft report

Mr. Hazinski concluded the presentation.

Aldr. Vitek thanked HVS for all the work, she thinks it looks great, but she grapples with maintaining the quality of the improvements, the quality has to be great to keep people wanting to come here; we have to be able to sustain it, whatever the cost is. She wants there to be a next-step look at what the marketing cost will be for all of this. She mentioned the tons of dollars invested in Michigan campaigns for several cities along the lakes; she thinks there's a hefty cost involved, and for us, we need to look at "who's cost that is", because she thinks they might be a lot larger than we may think, and that needs to be considered.

Aldr. Lewis asked about the drive times; sometimes it takes her 15 minutes and she lives 2 miles away, and she curious how they determine what a 15 minute drive is. Mr. Hazinski said they average drive times over the time of day, number of users, time of year; it's the average of that. Aldr. Lewis asked if they send out surveys. Mr. Hazinski said they combine their geodata with Google data, he's not sure exactly how it works, and they asked the same questions. Aldr. Lewis said the data looks like all local drivers within 15 min., and she doesn't understand how that

translates into overnight stays or restaurants. Mr. Hazinski said they'll be a lot of people out of the city as well, but those numbers shrink.

Aldr. Bessner asked if there were any examples shown that really stood out as being perfect for St. Charles. Mr. Hazinski said Columbus, Ga. is the closest because they have similar amenities. Greenville, SC. was the farthest because they do not have a whitewater feature. Mayor Rogina asked what accounts for the fact that our destination quotient was .483 and Columbus was .221. Mr. Hazinski said their income and population is lower, they have weaker demographics. Aldr. Bessner said in some of those example locations, some of those are maintained by the cities and one of them by the local park board. He asked if those were equalized cooperation amongst 3-4 different groups. Mr. Hazinski said he'd have to go back and look but he knows a few were city and park dist. involvement.

Aldr. Gaugel said we look at this so often as the water piece, which does drive it, but when the bike path and the connectivity was highlighter, it really hit home for him because he cycles on the weekends, and he thinks about destinations for stops along the way, and there's nothing like this within that radius. He sees this on the map, and it's not just drive distance, it's that bikeability, and we will get people biking out from Chicago just to spend the day at something like this, to canoe, kayak, rafting; it's exciting to him and shouldn't be underrated. Taking that same thought even further, we cannot just think of the water, it's the entire draw on the entire redevelopment of this corridor; he's happy to see that. He asked about the 50% increase in sales tax revenue in Georgia that was pulled in by 70 different businesses; are those existing businesses. Mr. Hazinski said probably new ones as well; they didn't give us that much detail of the data. He noted that there's always a problem of attribution there, it happened over that same period, how much if it was due to the river front development is an imprecision for the projections we will have of how much do you credit that development. The point is it was part of an overall redevelopment plan that seems to of worked.

Aldr. Stellato said good work from what he can see; he feels their number analysis is right on, the projections are conservative enough and he comfortable with he sees so far. He asked how we as a city and our tax payers benefit from this because he thinks the Fox River is going to become a loss leader destination for us and we as a city will benefit from folks coming down here as well as the folks developing the parcels shown. That development, the tax dollars, real estate tax and sales tax generated, he believes as the analysis goes forward, will prove up whether this is a good deal or not, he thinks we will find it's a good deal. He said if we choose alternates, how long would the build-out take, because there's an excitement level that's developed once it's announced and we will see developers and brokers start looking into the properties, which is our goal. Greg Chismark-WBK Engineering- said 3-5 years. Aldr. Stellato noted First St. and stated that didn't just start last year, it was a long process, and this will be the same type of development; were in it for the long haul, and hearing 3-5 years makes him even more comfortable to give the development community more time to get involved to redevelop those parcels.

Aldr. Payleitner asked if hotel visits were taken into consideration, because she spoke to the manager at the Q Center and he is all for it, because it would draw business for conventions and programs; it's an extra benefit for guests. Mr. Hazinski said that's a really good thought. Aldr. Payleitner noted that the recreation piece is just one piece of this, beautification which will

benefit our town and give us pride, also the environmental benefits, because eventually something will have to be done with the dam; so why not do it while we can control it and get other benefits out of it, as well as economic development benefits.

Aldr. Silkaitis said he wants to see the whole report with dollar amounts before he makes any decisions. Cost benefit, financial operation, etc.

Aldr. Lemke said he too thought we would see the cost benefits today, but the scenario of an island and a separate waterway is a good alternative, and he noticed the engineering report is clearly silent on putting in a middle crossing and we need to stick to the engineering report, we can do a zipline any day, or not, and he's very concerned about that and wonders if that's what make it pay-off, or that makes it cost more. He would like to have the engineering on something like that, and the footprint before, because it seems to be out of scope and surprises him. Mr. Hazinski said we will rely on WBK for that.

Aldr. Silkaitis asked how the dam fits into all this, do we assume it will be removed, or are we keeping it. Mr. Chismark said the dam would be removed and relocated north by the railroad trestle.

John Rabchuk-914 Ash St.-said all the numbers look terrific, there's a tremendous impact in addition to the recreational activity, it's not just the people that come to kayak or canoe. He noted in all the example towns listed and their numbers, it becomes a lifestyle that will attract all sorts of people for different reasons. St. Charles will become a destination, not just for recreation, but for living and standing out in the Midwest. Mr. Hazinski said this generation of millennials likes urban living and want to live in a place that has activity and amenities, so you'd be maintaining the population growth and creating downtown population which supports all the amenities; retail, restaurants, etc.; this would be a real aid in attracting those kind of residents.

Tom Anderson-712 Horne St.-said the activity back and forth would be great for our downtown. Underneath the Main St. bridge connecting with all of First St. gets tied into this, we are getting the whole downtown connected, instead of the river being a barrier.

Aldr. Turner asked if this would be going to the park dist. because we were supposed to be a 50/50 partner with them. Mr. Hazinski said they hadn't discussed this with the park dist. Aldr. Turner said they invited us, we knew nothing about this project, and now they're sticking us with the cost; he doesn't like it, and unless they're going to pay half he not in for this.

Mayor Rogina thanked Mr. Hazinski for his time and effort, and the audience who came to listen or participate, as well as the press. He noted that this would be going to Plan Commission in March, and then Planning & Development on April 8<sup>th</sup>.

Aldr. Lewis asked what's next. Ms. Tungare said the report will be developed a little bit further for the Plan Commission meeting on March 5<sup>th</sup>, and subsequently the complete final report will come to Planning & Development committee on April 8<sup>th</sup>. Committee may then do as they wish with the report, whether it's adopted formally, or just a presentation; it's up to Committee. Aldr. Lewis asked what adopting it formally would mean. Ms. Tungare said it doesn't necessarily obligate the city to do anything, it just means it has a little more teeth in it, it would liken it to

any other city policy that's been adopted, a policy is more for guidance, not binding in anyway; but it's the Council's prerogative.

Mayor Rogina said if the Council adopted the policy, would the logical next approach be some sort of preliminary engineering. Ms. Tungare said that would be the next step, if the Council chooses to go down that path. Mayor Rogina added with cost estimates I suppose, to be laid out to any and all participating entities. Ms. Tungare said if the Council wishes to engage into any kind of an intergovernmental agreement at that point that would be a step in the process as well.

5. **EXECUTIVE SESSION-None.**
6. **ADDITIONAL ITEMS FROM MAYOR, COUNCIL, STAFF OR CITIZENS-None.**
7. **ADJOURNMENT- Aldr. Turner made a motion to adjourn at 6:53pm. Seconded by Aldr. Stellato. Approved unanimously by voice vote. Motion Carried. 10-0**